



Xylophone

User guide

Soniccouture

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XYLOPHONE

Although we have an extensive collection of mallet percussion, one obvious gap in our catalog has long been the simple Xylophone. Many customers have asked us about it, and there hasn't a very good excuse for the omission. To be honest, we're not big fans of most modern xylophones; synthetic tone bars have a rather plasticky sound, often a bit harsh and unpleasant. Sometimes they seem most suitable for comedy soundtracks or the annual skeleton dance at Halloween.

But recently (2025) we stumbled across an instrument that's almost 100 years old. This xylophone had a warmth and personality to it that seemed almost cosy, friendlier than those we'd played before. It is made of Honduran Rosewood and is quite beaten up, it's clearly been played a lot! It's still in tune though, and has plenty of character. That's often enough to get us interested.



Furthermore, it turns out this instrument was owned by the celebrated British-Canadian jazz percussionist Peter Appleyard (1928-2013). We don't have definitive proof of this, but he did sign the instrument, and since we know the xylophone was built in the 1930s, something about it seems to make sense.

We arranged to borrow the instrument for a week and treat it with some love.

LEEDY



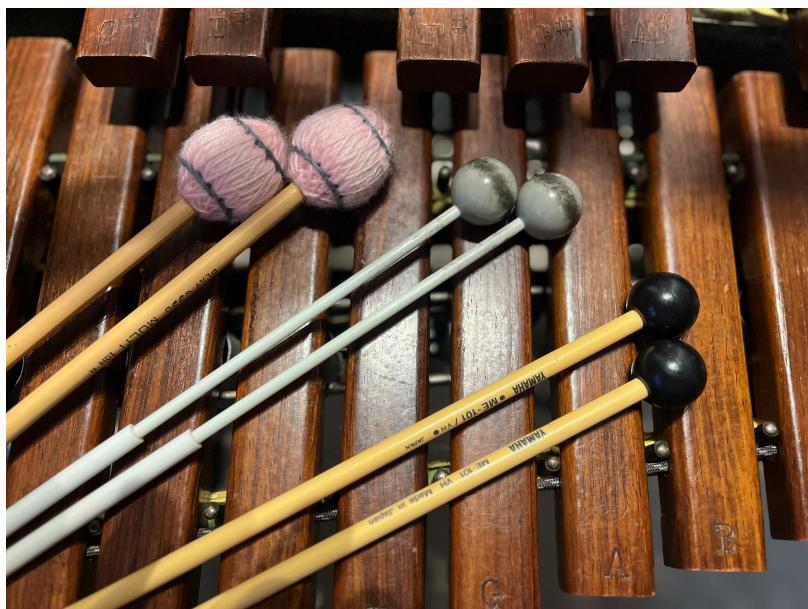
The Leedy Manufacturing Company was started by Ulysses Leedy and his roommate Sam Cooley in 1867. Working out of a basement in Indianapolis, Indiana they began building and selling drums and percussion equipment. One of their successful early products was an adjustable snare drum stand that Leedy himself patented in 1899. The company incorporated in 1902, and by 1920 had over twenty different departments. Herman Winterhoff became vice president of the company. He was responsible for the keyboard percussion division, and was later to invent the Vibraphone which was marketed by Leedy from 1924.



The model 660 Xylophone we sampled here was produced from early in the century through the 1920s and 30s.

RECORDING

We recorded the xylophone with two stereo pairs. A focused XY pair and a wider spaced pair. These are both available to mix on the front panel of the Kontakt instrument. There are between 50 and 60 different velocity samples per note, and we recorded the entire keyboard with three different mallets.



LIBRARY SPECIFICATIONS

Two stereo pairs at 24 bit / 48 kHz

Three articulations, mallet types

6,690 samples

1.3 GB with NCW compression

50-60 Velocity Layers



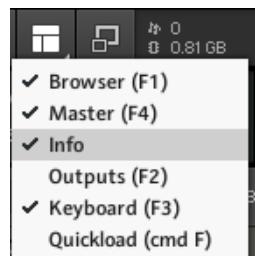
THE KONTAKT INSTRUMENT

SNAPSHOTS

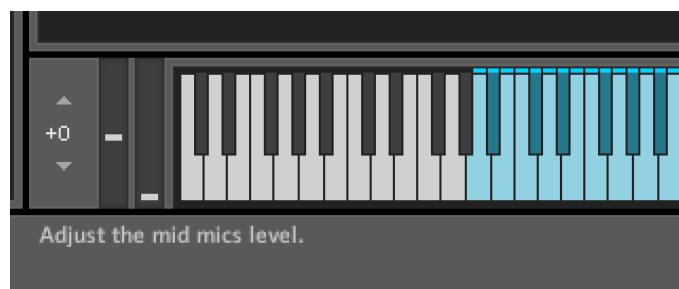


Kontakt stores presets as Snapshots, and you can use this function to save your own edits or setups. We've provided a few of these ourselves to give you an idea.

HOVER HELP

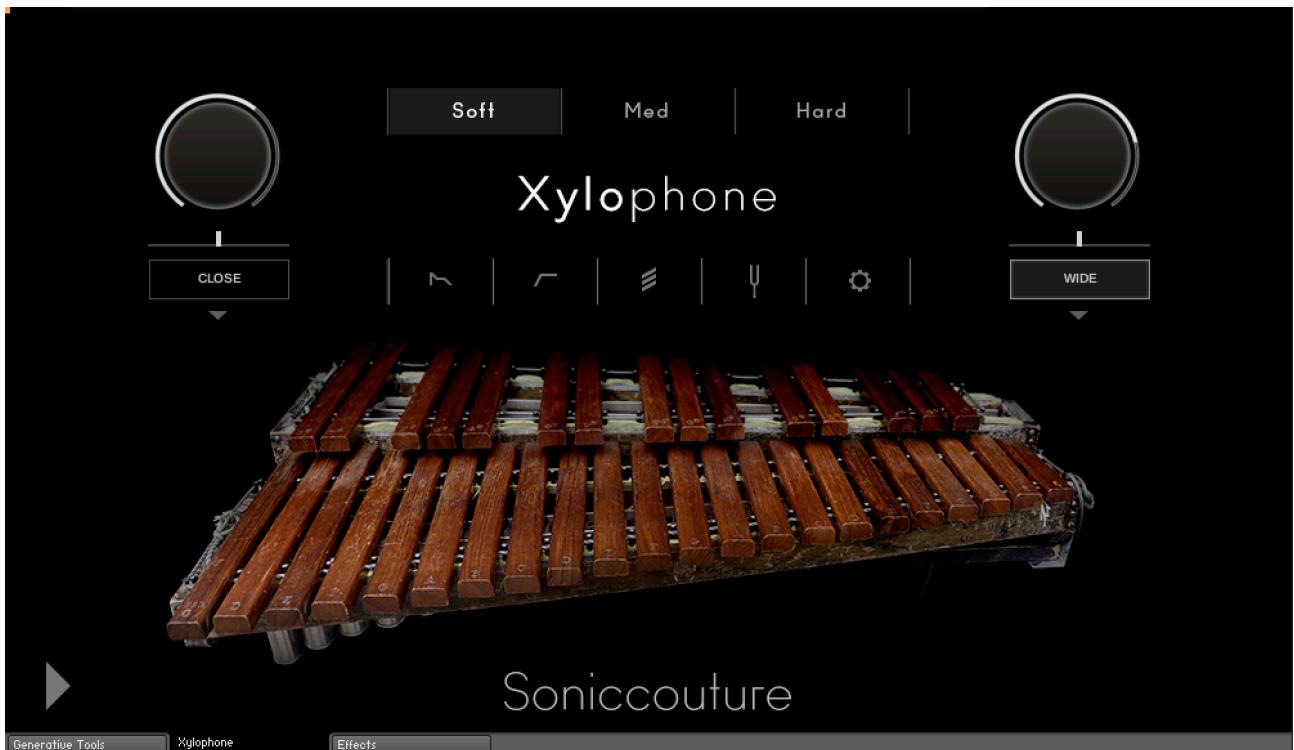


If you activate the Info pane in Kontakt, you can hover over any control in the instrument and a short note will appear in the Info pane at the bottom describing what that control does.



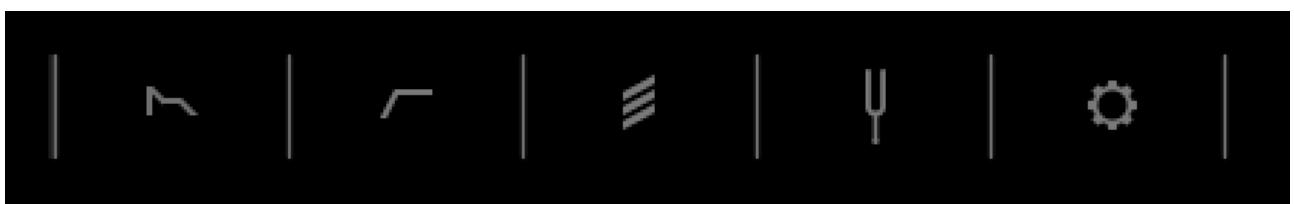
OVERVIEW

The main page of the instrument looks like the picture below. There are two large volume knobs, one for each microphone pair; CLOSE, and WIDE. Beneath the knobs are PAN sliders, and a large switch which enables or disables that mic pair. Small arrows below the on/off switch allow you to route the microphones to different Kontakt outputs if you need.



Across the middle, just above the "Xylophone" title, is a row of three switches; "Soft", "Med", and "Hard". This is your mallet choice.

Across the middle, just below the "Xylophone" title, is a row of five icons. These open the various editors. They are, from right to left, Amplitude, Filter, Tremolo, Microtuning, and Options.



We'll look at each of those edit pages individually.

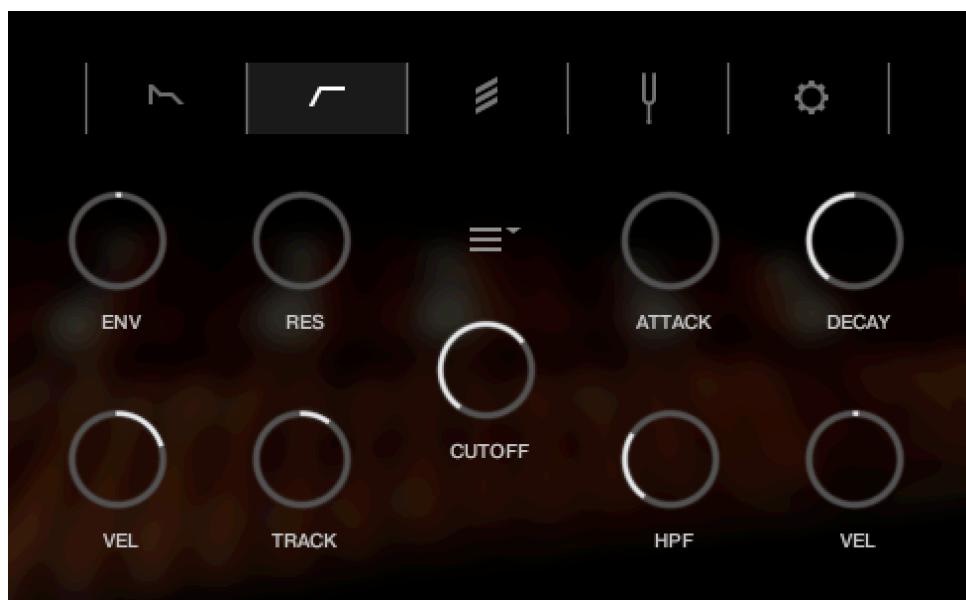
AMPLITUDE



The AMPLITUDE tab gives you control of the AHD Amplitude envelope; ATTACK, HOLD, and DECAY. VEL ATK is a velocity to attack time modulator... when raised, the attack time is increased at higher velocities. TRACK adjusts the level across the keyboard, when positive, this lowers the volume at higher pitches, and when negative this lowers the volume at lower pitches.



FILTER



On the FILTER tab you can control the filter CUTOFF frequency, as well as choose the filter type with a drop down menu. Here you can also control the RESONANCE of the filter, the ENVelope depth, the VELOCITY to filter cutoff depth, and the keyboard TRACKing of the cutoff frequency.

There is also a High Pass Filter and VELOCITY to that cutoff frequency.

The Filter Envelope parameters are also on this page: ATTACK, DECAY only control the main filter ENV, not the HPF.



TREMOLO



The TREMOLO tab lets you control the tremolo RATE, in the middle. On the left you can control how much randomness there is in the velocity and speed of the tremolo, and on the right you can control the modulation depth of the velocity and speed of the tremolo.

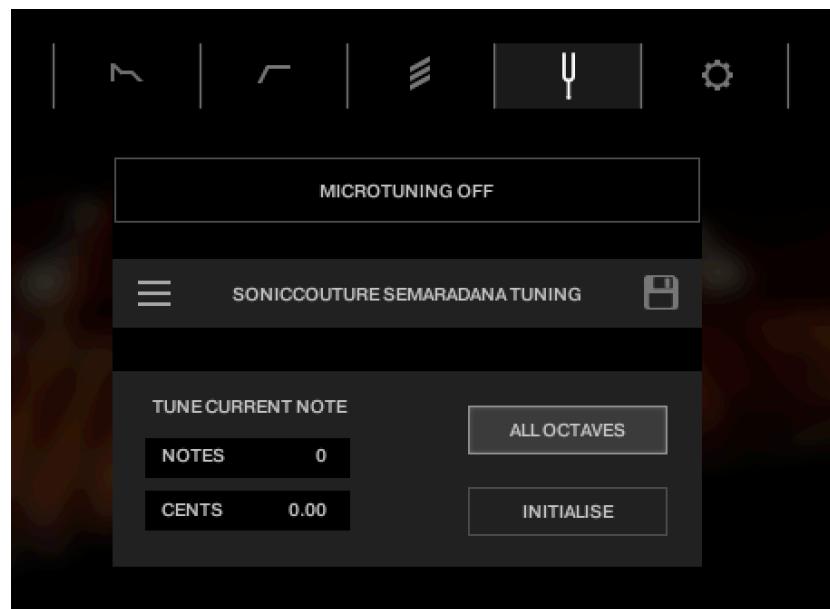
The modulation is the large knob in the middle. This allows you to adjust the velocity and speed of the tremolo while it's running. This is by default mapped to the mod wheel, CC1, but you can change this with a right click if you like.

The button at the bottom is the tremolo ON/OFF switch. This is by default mapped to the sustain pedal (CC 64), but you can also change this with a right click if you like.



MICROTUNING

The tuning tab opens the microtuning panel.



The MICROTUNING OFF switch turns the microtuning function on or off.

There is a burger menu of some PRESETS at the left, and an import/export disk menu to the right of the tuning info/name. You can import scales exported from other Soniccouture instruments, or if you want you can generate scales using the Sevish's [Scale Workshop](#) website. There is an export to Soniccouture format option there.

Lower left is displayed the TUNE CURRENT NOTE, the key that is currently being edited. You can adjust the NOTES (semitones) or CENTS offset of whichever key is currently selected.

If ALL OCTAVES is checked (at the bottom right) then all instances of that key will change together... this is very useful if you're designing a scale that repeats at the octave, which many of course do. INITIALISE will set the microtuning to equal temperament, no offsets for any notes.

OPTIONS



The far right cog icon opens the Options editor. In this editor you can adjust various performance options. The top two knobs are VELOCITY RANDOM, and TIMING random.

Below this you have the velocity to amplitude control, as well as a CURVE for the velocity response. The MODE switch below the CURVE knob enables the curve and velocity limits to also affect the Velocity to Volume sensitivity. If MODE is off, then the Velocity Sensitivity works for the entire velocity range, not just the limited range.



There is a menu in the middle of this page with some options that can be turned on or off.

EXTEND RANGE allows the Kontakt instrument to play some notes below and above the original range of the sampled instrument.

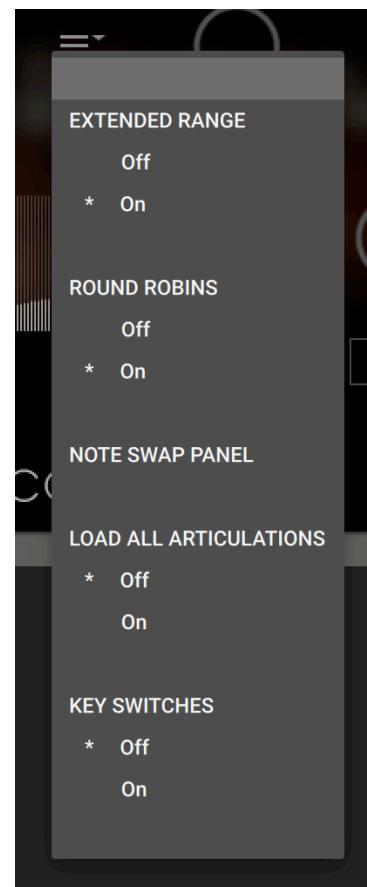
ROUND ROBINS can be turned on or off. We recommend leaving them ON.

KEY SWITCHES can be turned on or off, which will let you change the MALLETS type from keyswitches. If you need to do this regularly, you might consider turning on the LOAD ALL ARTICULATIONS option.

LOAD ALL ARTICULATIONS loads all three mallet types into memory at once. This takes a fair amount of RAM, but it means you can change mallet types instantly, with the keyswitches, with the buttons, or with the NKS knob, and there won't be any delay while the new samples load.

This is OFF by default, so there is some delay when changing mallet types... but this saves memory.

And lastly you can open the Note Swap panel, if you need to.

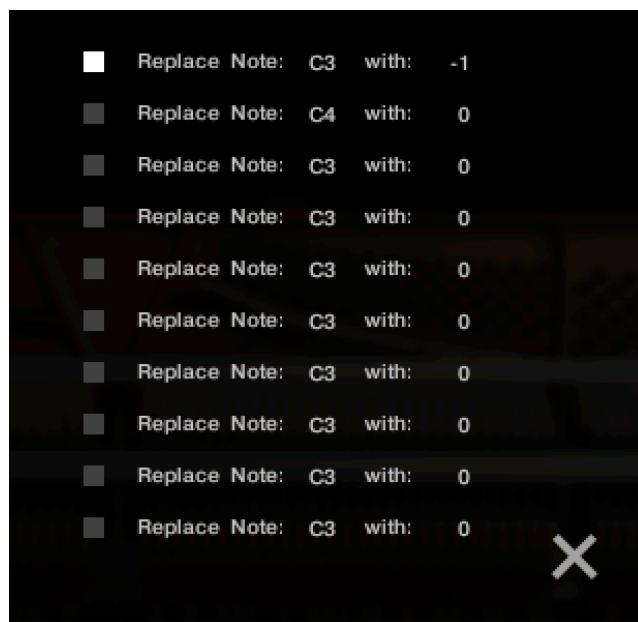


NOTE SWAP PANEL

Xylophone is a natural, acoustic instrument and we sampled every key because that's our general philosophy. This means we often capture keys that are slightly odd or have a different character from the neighbouring keys. In the interests of authenticity we like to keep these characteristics in our products. The quirks of the acoustic instrument become quirks of the sampled instrument.

But sometimes a certain key might be driving you crazy, especially if in a certain piece of music it's repeated too often. This NOTE SWAP function lets you replace any key with a neighbouring key. For example you might find that the key a semitone higher or lower works better for a certain musical passage, so feel free to experiment if you find a certain note has a little TOO much character for your purposes.

To enable a NOTE SWAP, you turn ON the row with the switch at the left. The note you want to replace can be set in the middle, and the note you want to replace it with set at the end of the row. For example in the picture below, C3 is being replaced with the samples from the key one semitone below it (ie B2). You can enable up to 10 note swaps per instance, and this setup is stored with the Snapshot.



EFFECTS

The EFFECTS panel is divided into 5 sections.



Insert Effects

Equaliser

Stereo

Saturation

Space

THE INSERT EFFECTS

Here you can choose up to 3 insert effects. The effect is enabled with the square power switch to the left of its name at the top of the tab, and the appropriate controls will appear below when its tab is selected.

You can select from a list of effects using the menu to the right of the effect name in the tab.



The effects are in routing order from left to right, and are before the EQ and other effects on this panel.

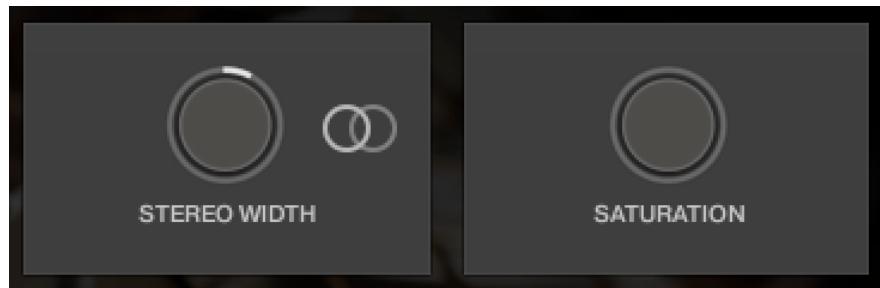
You can only select each type of effect once, if you select an effect already in use, then the position of those effects will be swapped.

EQUALISER

This is a fairly obvious four band parametric EQ. The fader on the far right is the output level from the EQ.



Note that BELL and SHELF are drop down menus, you can choose either for the top and bottom bands. You can enable or disable the EQ with the power switch at the top left.



STEREO AND SATURATION

Here you can adjust the STEREO WIDTH (the natural recording is nominal at 12 o'clock). Moving the control left narrows the width, and to the right increases it.

There is a stereo SWAP feature, enabled with the symbol:



SATURATION will adjust the SATURATION effect.

SPACE

This is the convolution reverb section. In the middle there is a drop down menu with a selection of our impulse responses.



As usual, the power switch is at the top left.

The controls below are the PREDELAY, the convolution impulse SIZE, a High Pass and Low Pass Filter, as well as the return MIX level on the large central knob.



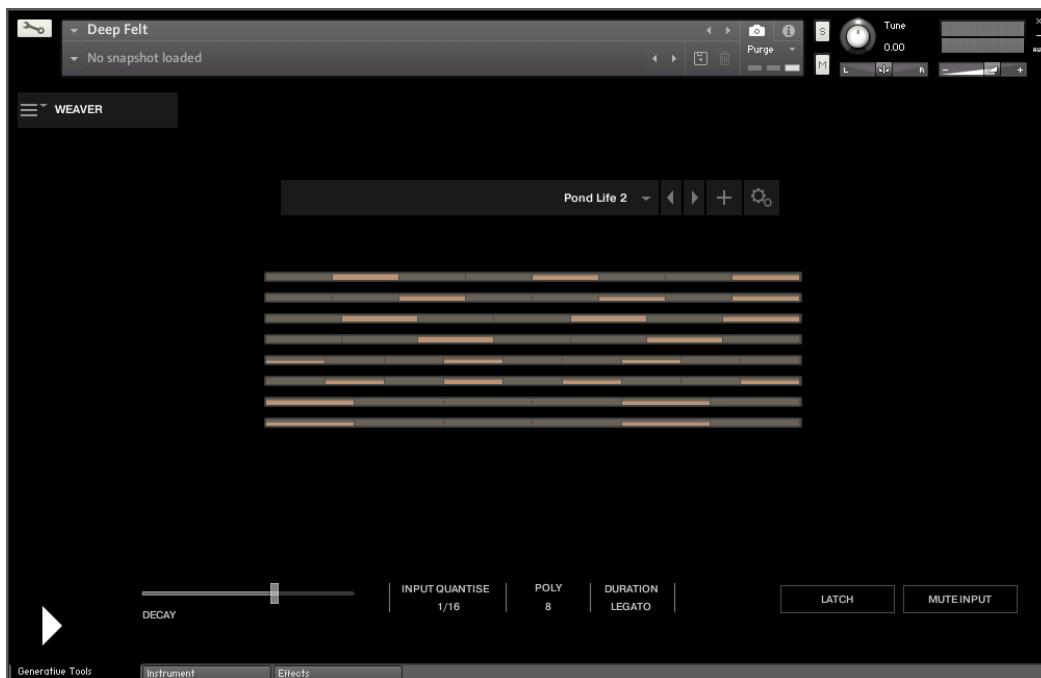
GENERATIVE TOOLS

This panel has two options, chosen with the menu at the top left:

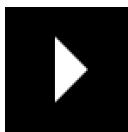
JAMMER



WEAVER



JAMMER



The PLAY icon at the bottom left enables or disables the Jammer. This control is duplicated on the other pages for convenience.

The large knob in the top middle is a Preset wheel with 12 presets. You can overwrite these, copy them, import and export them, using the menu to the right of the wheel.

The five knobs along the top of the Jammer are global controls, these are:



MODE This sets the type of arpeggiation used to create patterns. The original Jammer mode is Random mode, but you can also choose Up, Down, or Up Down, for somewhat more traditional arpeggiator results. This controls how the notes are selected from what you are holding down.

RATE controls the speed of the Jammer, this is always related to the tempo of Kontakt or the host sequencer.

LENGTH is an offset to the duration of the created notes. In the centre position, the notes are created at the same duration set by the Rate knob, but using LENGTH you can make these longer or shorter.



VEL OFFSET adds or subtracts from the velocity of the notes created by the Jammer. Automating this can be useful for creating fades.

SWING adds some time to the offbeat notes to give a shuffle or swing feeling to the rhythm.

The next five sliders, below the knobs, are controls for the generative part of Jammer, which are essentially randomising various aspects of note generation. These are:

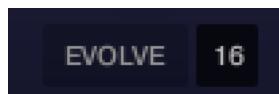
NOTE add random offsets to the pitches you give Jammer (are holding down). This is in semitones, so if it's set to "1" the Jammer will output notes plus or minus 1 from the notes you play, as well as the note you play.

OCTAVE add random octave offsets to the pitches created by Jammer. This control only ADDS octaves, it doesn't subtract octaves.

TIME add random changes to the timing of the Jammer, so that the result is less stable and rhythmic.

VELOCITY add random changes to the velocity of the output notes. This always uses the input velocity as a starting point, so if the VELOCITY range is small, it will just add small changes to your input velocity.

GAPS add random rests or silent beats into the Jammer sequence.



In the middle of this section you'll see a button titled "EVOLVE", with the number 16 to the right of it (by default). EVOLVE mode means that the Jammer is working to generate new data constantly, the randomisers are always creating new patterns from your input notes.

If you click on EVOLVE, the button changes to display LOOP. Now the Jammer is repeating the pattern it most recently created. The length of this pattern is determined by the number to the right, so by default it repeats the last 16 generated 'notes'.



It's important to remember that the Jammer is not storing the 'notes' themselves, but rather the choice of, and offsets to, the input notes you play into it. So even in LOOP mode, the Jammer will output different notes depending on what notes you play. The pattern is stored, not the exact notes themselves. This means you can create quite complicated patterns, but play them with any chord or input notes.

There are three buttons on the left:

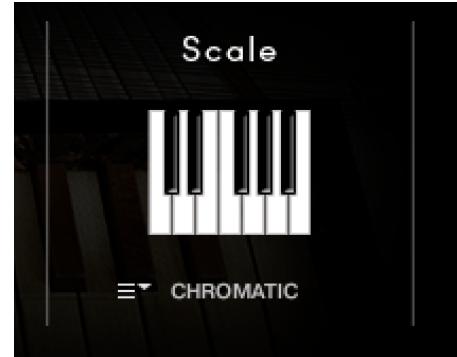


RETRIGGER will force the Jammer to start from the beginning after all notes are lifted (legato).

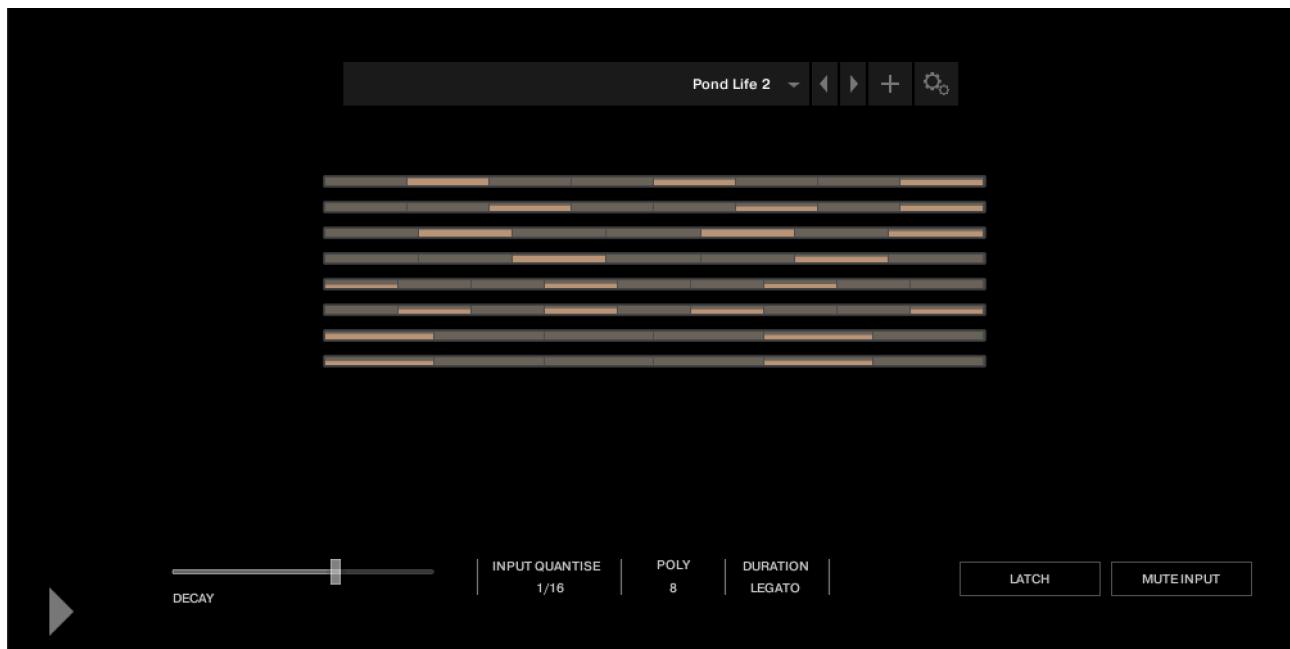
DOUBLE will trigger two notes on each step, as if you are playing with both hands simultaneously.

LATCH will tell the Jammer to hold the current notes until new notes are received.

At the right is a small keyboard that represents a pitch filter. Here you can limit the output notes of the Jammer to a certain key or chord or any selection of notes you like. At the bottom of the small keyboard is a drop down menu with some popular scales, but you can click on the keyboard directly to allow or disallow any pitch as you like.



WEAVER



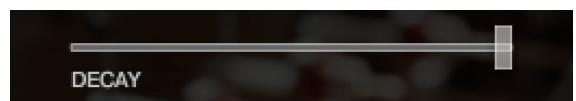
The WEAVER is a tool that allows you to define a rhythmic sequence to be played by an input note. More about how this works later, in the Weaver Editor section below.



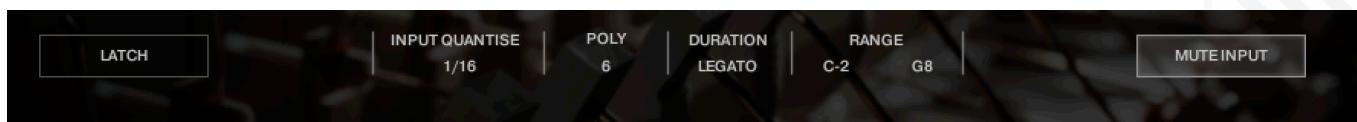
The main page has a PRESET menu at the top, you can choose these from the drop down or by stepping through them. You can store your own settings to any of these menu positions using the + button. And you can import and export presets if you need with the cog menu on the far right of the PRESET bar.

In the middle of the page is a rough representation of the WEAVER pattern, and if you click on that you will open the WEAVER EDITOR.

Below that, there is a large slider labeled DECAY. This controls the overall decay time of the sequence, since each pattern will loop. If set all the way to the right, the pattern will never decay.



At the bottom are some global controls for the WEAVER sequence.



LATCH will hold the current notes, even if you let go of the keys.

INPUT QUANTISE. This is very useful, but only works if Kontakt is running its own transport, or else is inside a running DAW. But when this is the case, none of the WEAVER patterns will trigger until they're in sync with the value set in INPUT QUANTISE. (ie. 1/16th note) This keeps your patterns really tight and in sync with the song you might be working on.

POLY is the polyphony of the WEAVER pattern. From 1 to 8. If you play more notes than that, they are ignored by the WEAVER engine.

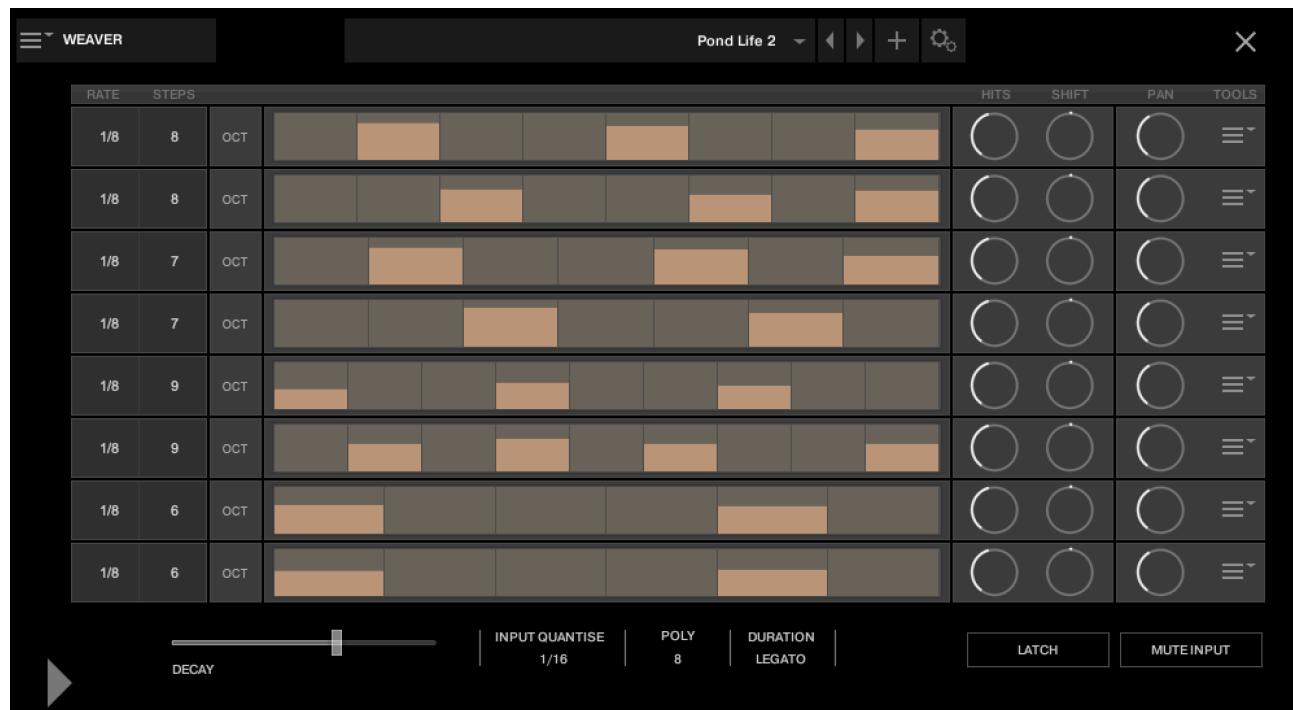
DURATION is the duration of the notes generated by WEAVER, and this can be set to a value, or else to LEGATO, in which case it will play until the next note on any given row comes along.

RANGE allows you to limit the range of the WEAVER, so you could in theory play a bassline with your left hand and have WEAVER only respond to notes played with your right hand.

MUTE INPUT turns off the MIDI sent into WEAVER, so you'll only hear the notes generated by WEAVER. Sometimes this is what you want, but also sometimes it's nice to hear the original notes and have WEAVER accompany them, respond to the notes you play.

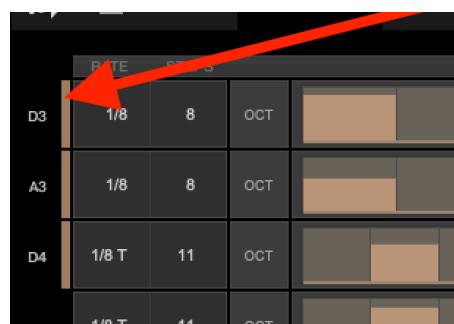
Let's click on the middle panel and open up the WEAVER editor. It can look a little intimidating at first.



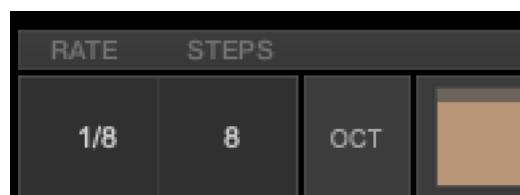


You can close this window again with the X at the top right.

The above display shows all 8 rows active (POLY set to 8). All rows are the same.



Notes are assigned a row in the order they're received. You can see the notes assigned to each row at the far left when you play.

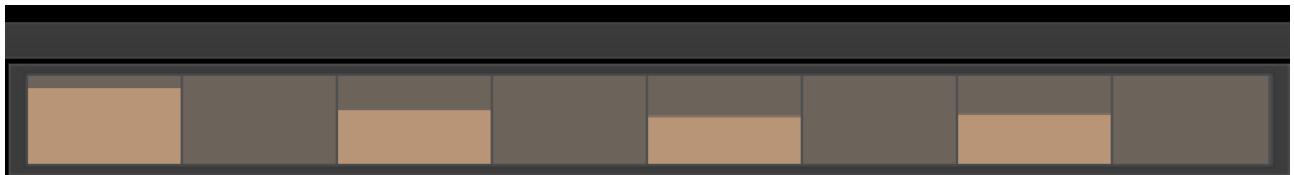


At the left of each row, you can set the RATE and the number of STEPS for the row. Here this row is set to 8 steps of 1/8th notes.

There is also an OCT switch here, OCTAVE, which we'll discuss a bit later.



In the middle is the velocity steps table. You can draw in here as you like. This pattern uses the input velocity, so the maximum output velocity will be the velocity of the note that triggered the pattern.



If you ALT-drag, you can set all active steps to the same velocity.

On the right there are two EUCLID generator controls. HITS and SHIFT. Be careful with these, because they will write new data into the pattern table, and overwrite anything you may have drawn.

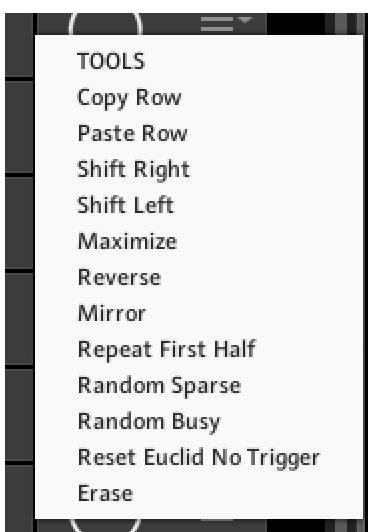
EUCLID rhythm generators basically spread a number of hits, as evenly distributed as possible, within a number of STEPS. So if you set this HITS to 5, it will try to evenly distribute those 5 hits among the 8 steps we set that row to contain.



SHIFT shifts the position of those EUCLID HITS, left or right, in the pattern.

The PAN control introduces random panning to notes generated on that row.

POWER TIP IF YOU WANT TO SET ALL ROWS THE SAME, HOLD DOWN ALT OR OPTION WHILE ADJUSTING A PARAMETER



And lastly at the far right, there is a menu with some drop down tools to manipulate the row.



OCTAVE

When you press the OCT button on the left, you see a blue table instead of the orange one. This is an octave shift table that can transpose the incoming note one or two octaves up. This is nice for adding some variation to the WEAVER pattern.



A NOTE ABOUT THE PRESET STORE BUTTON



When you press the preset store button, it turns green:

This is a kind of “store enable” mode. If you now choose a menu item, your preset will be stored at the menu location you store.

If you just hit the store button again, it will overwrite the preset you had selected when you started editing. So you can just click it twice quickly to store the preset where it is.



SUPPORT

If you have any problems or questions relating to the use of this product, please feel free to contact us. You can email us at :

<http://www.soniccouture.com/en/support/>

We will always endeavour to reply to any enquiry within 24 hours. We are based in the UK, so please bear in mind differences in time zones.

While you are waiting, you will find lots of answers to common questions in our FAQ.



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